

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /104 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 2254

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN JORDON

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT LE

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON UK

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

COMIDEASTFOR

CNO WASHINGTON DC

SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0764

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PINS, PINT, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAIN SECURITY DECREE

REF : MANAMA 0721

SUMMARY: WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RECESSED FOR THE SUMMER,
GOVERNMENT AND SOME ELECTED DEPUTIES APPEAR TO BE TRYING TO
BIND THE WOUNDS OF THE SECURITY DECREE CONFRONTATION. GOVERN-
MENT APPEARS DETERMINED BOTH TO MAINTAIN ITS RIGHTS IN SECURITY
FIELD AND TO PRESERVE CONSTITUTIONAL PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIMENT
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IN BAHRAIN. AS GOVERNMENT REASSESSSES HOW IT WILL PROCEED NEXT

FALL, WE SHARE ASSESSMENT WITH SOME MINISTERS THAT IT IS UNFORTUNATE SECURITY DECREE QUESTION WAS NOT SETTLED, SINCE MANY PRESSING SOCIAL/ECONOMIC ISSUES OF INCREASING POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE FACE THE GOVERNMENT WHEN IT RETURNS TO PARLIAMENTARY LISTS NEXT OCTOBER. END SUMMARY

1. ON BASIS JUNE 23 DECREE REPORTED REFTTEL, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S SEASON ENDED WITH A WHIMPER. AFTER SOME BREATH-CATCHING AND WOUND-LICKING, GOVERNMENT AND ELECTED DEPUTIES APPEARED TO BE SORTING OUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN SEARCH OF CONSTRUCTIVE BASIS FOR IMPROVED EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE COOPERATION WHEN SESSION STARTS NEXT FALL. FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD ME WITH SOME AMUSEMENT JULY 2 THAT THAT EVENING ELECTED DEPUTIES WERE TO GIVE A DINNER PARTY FOR THE CABINET AS A GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION. WHILE WE SUSPECT THERE WAS MORE "KISSING" THAN REAL "MAKING UP" AT THAT EVENT, DESIRE OF GOVERNMENT AND AT LEAST SOME DEPUTIES TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES SEEMS SINCERE.

2. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH MINISTERS AND OTHERS OVER LAST TWO WEEKS, WE ARE PERSUADED GOB REGARDS FLAP OVER SECURITY DECREE AS A SERIOUS TESTING POINT IN EVOLUTION OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN BAHRAIN. SUPERFICIALLY, GOVERNMENT WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE "WON ON POINTS" IN ITS TEST OF STRENGTH WITH THE ASSEMBLY. IT CERTAINLY LEFT NO DOUBT IN MINDS OF EITHER PUBLIC OF ELECTED DEPUTIES THAT REGIME HAS NO INTENTION OF PERMITTING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO WEAKEN WHAT IT REGARDS AS EXECUTIVE PEROGATIVE TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER. WE HEAR CERTAIN MODERATE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY FEEL SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSED BY ENTIRE AFFAIR IN THAT THEY SENSE ASSEMBLY TRIED TO OVERSTEP ITSELF AND FELL ON ITS FACE AS FAR AS PUBLIC OPINION IS CONCERNED.

3. DURING THE SECURITY DECREE PARLIAMENTARY CRISIS, IT WAS BRUITED ABOUT THAT THE AMIR WAS SEIOUSLY CONSIDERING DOING AWAY WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. WE HAVE NO DOUBT HE WAS MUTTERING ALONG THIS LINE (HE DOES SO FREQUENTLY IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH US) BUT WE BELIEVE THIS WAS INTENDED AS A SIGNAL TO WARN ASSEMBLY MODERATES NOT TO OVERSTEP THE REALISTIC LIMITS OF THEIR AUTHORITY AT THIS POINT IN BAHRAIN'S PARLIAMENTARY EVOLUTION. CERTAINLY GOVERNMENT HAS STRONGLY TAKEN PUBLIC POSTURE (SEVERAL MINISTERS HAVE ASSURED US PRIVATELY) THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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REGIME IS DETERMINED TO MAKE CONSTITUTIONAL PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIMENT IN BAHRAIN WORK.

4. GOB STILL APPEARS TO BE REASSESSING WHERE IT GOES FROM HERE NOT JUST ON SECURITY DECREE ISSUE ITSELF BUT ON ITS OVERALL APPROACH IN DEALING WITH THE ASSEMBLY. CERTAIN MINISTERS, SIGNIFICANTLY THOSE SHIA WHO ARE LEGALLY TRAINED, HAVE BEEN HINTING THAT GOVERNMENT MAY IN FUTURE SEEK TO BYPASS ASSEMBLY

WHEREVER POSSIBLE. FOR INSTANCE, WHY SHOULD GOVERNMENT FACE NOT ONLY SECURITY DECREE BATTLE BUT ALSO LABOR LAW BATTLE WITH ASSEMBLY NEXT YEAR WHEN IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO "EVOLVE" A MORE UP-TO-DATE ADMINISTRATION OF LABOR MATTERS HERE BY A COMBINATION OF THE EXISTING LAW, ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, AND "COMMON LAW PRECEDENT" AS VARIOUS LABOR DISPUTES COME BEFORE THE COURTS?

5. OTHER INFLUENTIAL MINISTERS, HOWEVER, NOTABLY SUNNIS INVOLVED MORE WITH POLICY THAN LEGAL MATTERS, SUCH AS DEVELOPMENT MINISTER SHIRAWI, INFORMATION MINISTER MOAYYED AND FOREIGN MINISTER SEEM LESS ELATED ABOUT THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE GOVERNMENT/ASSEMBLY STANDOFF ON THE SECURITY DECREE. MOAYYED HAS AS MUCH ADMITTED TO US THAT IN RETROSPECT GOB PROBABLY ERRED IN NOT RAMMING SECURITY LAW THROUGH THE ASSEMBLY EARLY LAST FALL AND THUS GETTING THIS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OUT OF THE WAY. THESE MINISTERS DO NOT RELISH HAVING TO FACE THIS ISSUE AGAIN NEXT FALL AND APPEAR TO FEEL GOB HAS FRITTERED AWAY A LOT OF TIME. THEY OF COURSE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PROCEED WITH A SUMMER EFFORT OF LOBBYING WITH THE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE RELATIONSHIP IN GENERAL AND TO OBTAIN ASSEMBLY SUPPORT FOR PERHAPS REVISED SECURITY BILL IN PARTICULAR.

6. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE IT UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN DISPOSED OF SINCE THE 1974-75 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION WAS, BY THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN TIMETABLE, THE YEAR FOR RESOLVING POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS SUCH AS THIS. BY NEXT OCTOBER, THE GOB MUST BE PREPARED TO FACE ASSEMBLY ON A NUMBER OF ECONOMIC/SOCIAL ISSUES, SUCH AS THE HOUSING PLIGHT OF THE LESS WEALTHY BAHRAINIS, WHICH ARE GATHERING SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL HEAT. THE LONG PENDING LABOR LAW WILL ALSO TEND TO FALL UNDER THIS CATEGORY. HENCE WHILE THERE IS EVERY EVIDENCE THAT BAHRAIN

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IS BASICALLY SECURE AND STABLE POLITICALLY AND LOOKING FORWARD TO ENJOYING A WELL DESERVED SUMMER REST, WE WOULD APPEAR TO BE IN FOR AN EXCITING PARLIAMENTARY SEASON STARTING NEXT FALL, WITH SEVERAL KEY ISSUES STILL TO BE RESOLVED.
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